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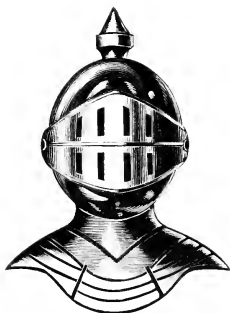
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HUGUENOT ANCESTRY.



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HUGUENOT ANCESTRY.

DURING the entire summer of 1843, I suffered from severe chronic headaches, an inheritance from both parents. They resulted in great prostration, making efforts of any kind oppressive, and as far as possible to be avoided. My family consulted Dr. A. H. Okie, who had then located his office and practice in the building on Benefit street, opposite Thomas street, which was subsequently Miss Staples' school-room. The doctor having advised a protracted sea voyage for the more permanent relief from this painful indisposition, I took passage in the "St. Nicholas," of the New York and Havre line of packets.

We were to have sailed on the 2d of October. I went to New York a few days previous, and found that my room was in the extreme after part of the ship, and my only access to it would be across the saloon deck. I, of course, refused such hazardous exposure. I re-

turned home sadly disappointed, but the result proved that I should be much benefited, as it was decided that my younger sister, somewhat of an invalid, would accompany me, as well as my wife. Returning to New York, I found superior accommodations for all in the ship "Duchesse D'Orleans," Captain Addison Richardson, which was to sail on the following Saturday, October 9th. Our changed arrangements were productive of the greatest pleasure, as with other fellow passengers we had the family of the accomplished architect, Richard M. Hunt, Esq., consisting of his mother, sister, three brothers, and himself; also Prof. Charles C. Jewett, of Brown University, Miss Susan Dehone, and a young gentleman named Haskell, both of Boston, and others agreeable in person and manner. My wife and sister occupied the same compartment, and I found a most agreeable room-mate in Mr. Haskell. Miss Dehone was accompanied by her attendant, Mrs. Richardson, who was so homesick as to return with the ship, not going on shore at all. Miss Dehone thus became our protégé until the arrival of some friends in Paris. Her society gave us much pleasure. Most of the passengers were

strongly affected by the roughness of the voyage, especially Mr. Jewett and Miss Hunt, the former remaining upon the deck under all circumstances, while it was necessary to bring Miss Hunt from her state-room as often as the weather would allow. Our voyage was not by any means protracted nor pleasurable, but severely boisterous, although with favorable winds. Our decks were seldom dry, from constant rain and shipping heavy seas. We were sixteen days from pilot to pilot, and but one half day more from port to port, arriving at Havre between the 25th and 26th of the same month. I think the Captain had but two full observations during the entire passage. Standing near Captain Richardson one day, the mate came aft and told him that we could carry no longer the studding sails, as we might lose them. "Let them go, then," he replied "take nothing in," which fully sustained his reputation for daring among sailors at home and abroad.

At daybreak on the 26th a ship was sighted a little ahead of us. Captain Richardson was in ecstasies, as he had taken a large quantity of freight left by the "St. Nicholas," with his personal guarantee against

any loss that might arise from his arrival after her, and there was the vessel but a few miles ahead of us. Having all sails set, we soon passed her, although in entering the dock gates the pilot fouled our ship against them. I have heard of extreme rage and violent epithets, but our Captain paled with anger and jumped up and down as violently as his words and exclamations were forcible and rapid. Notwithstanding this mishap, we were made fast to the dock before the "St. Nicholas," and thus Captain Richardson was absolved from all responsibility.

We took our first table d'hôte at the Hotel d'Havre, and passed day and evening amidst sights and scenes as strange and different from home as can possibly be imagined; among them donkey-carts, market-women, with their high Normandy caps, and other peculiar costumes.

The delightful associations of our sea life with such refined and agreeable fellow passengers, would not allow any disruption from the mere fact of being on shore, and all remained that day and the next at the Hotel d'Havre. On the succeeding day we took our departure for Paris via Rouen, remaining there suffi-

cient time for visiting its far-famed cathedral and other places of interest, after which we resumed our seats in the diligence for Paris, where we arrived October 27th, at night, still dreading and avoiding the disagreeable words of farewell and separation. We were very pleasantly located at the Hotel du Bade, Rue Helder, Boulevard des Italiens, Mrs. Hunt and family occupying the larger upper apartments, and ourselves the smaller, immediately under them. We were very fortunate in our location, as Monsieur Dubois was, by vocation, a reputed baker, which gave us facilities in our living—our roasted meats, “gateaux, tourtes des pommes,” and such other necessities or luxuries as were required for our daily wants, he being a very competent and obliging landlord. The ladies were a little inclined to be rebellious when their pleasure or convenience required the services of the “femme de chambre,” who proved to be a well developed biped of the masculine gender ; but time and necessity make strange reconciliations.

All of our early childhood had been cheered and brightened by our honored and endeared mother's narration of her life and uninterrupted associations with

her grandmother, Esther Tourtellot, who was the great-granddaughter of Gabriel Bernon, who resided in the gambrel-roofed brick house which stood, until within a few years, near the junction of Benefit and North Main streets, the old elm tree now remaining there being in her grandmother's yard. I will not hazard the supposition of its being planted by her, as I do not know its origin. I think now that my mother's ready acquiescence in my younger sister's absence from home, was the hope and wish that we might by some favorable circumstance be known by, and associated with, the members of her grandmother's family then living in Bordeaux and La Rochelle, which I had promised should be faithfully and as extensively accomplished as time, health and other circumstances would possibly allow. The pleasant surroundings of our location, the Hotel du Bade, justified leaving my wife (also as direct a descendant as myself of Gabriel Bernon) and sister under the kind and protective care of Mrs. Hunt and daughter.

I arranged with the Hon. Henry Ledyard, at Paris, chargé d'affaires, in the absence of our minister (his father-in-law, Gen. Lewis Cass, who was then in the

United States), for my presentation at the king's reception for gentlemen, early in December. After this I left Paris, accompanied by Messrs. William and John Hunt, for Bordeaux, to ascertain what I could of Gabriel Tourtellot or his family, ancestors of my mother's grandmother. We arrived at Bordeaux early on the day we left Paris. After a most interesting diligence ride through Orleans, where we visited the monument to Joan of Arc, we passed through many old walled towers, under the portcullis, to the entrance through narrow streets, lighted by lanterns, suspended by ropes across them.

The next morning was bright and cheerful. While walking on the quays we saw the stars and stripes floating proudly aloft from the mast-head of several ships from Boston and New York, then lying in the harbor. It was the first time we had ever seen our beautiful national emblem in a foreign land; every hat was simultaneously removed, while glowing hearts and cheering voices gave it recognition.

Taking a boatman we boarded several ships and received a cordial welcome from officers and crew. It must be remembered that at this time there were no

six days' passages across the Atlantic on steamers, and a voyage to foreign ports was of uncertain duration and casualty. In exchange for their cordial greeting, we were enabled to give them the latest intelligence from home that they could have received. Returning to the hotel, we were highly delighted with our morning's experience, and congratulated ourselves that as we could not reverence the day by religious worship, we could justify as a substitute the purest and strongest emotions of patriotism and loyalty to our beloved country.

Before leaving Paris, I was fortunate in securing the services, as courier and travelling servant, of Joseph Henner, a man of an agreeable personal prestige and manner. He was of superior education, and more than ordinarily familiar with several languages. The next day, with Henner, we thoroughly searched Bordeaux for some representative of the Tourtellot family, but could not find any person or recognize the name on a single sign in the place. My next object of research was the Bernon family at La Rochelle.

We left the next morning for that quaint, old, highly interesting place. When leaving home, my

mother gave me the history of the Huguenot ancestors which she had received from her grandmother. It was in English, but Henner's ability and intelligence most satisfactorily translated it into French.

At breakfast the next morning I told Henner to enquire of the waitress and landlady if they knew of any family by the name of Bernon in the place. They promptly replied, "Yes." There was Madame la veuve Bernon, living at No. — Rue ——. The name of the street and number I have forgotten.

After arranging my papers and toilet very critically, Henner and I started out on our most interesting and exciting mission. We readily found the place, and ringing the bell, it was answered by a very comely and neatly dressed maid in the peculiar Normandy costume and cap. We enquired if Madame Bernon was at home. She very hesitatingly assented. Henner, as instructed, told her to say to her mistress that a young American gentleman, a descendant of Gabriel Bernon, wished to see her. The girl rapidly returned and said her mistress did not wish to see the gentleman, and to inform him

that there was no property of any kind remaining undisposed of.

As she was closing the door, Henner said: "My master is a gentleman 'rentier,' travelling for pleasure, with sufficient resources. He does not wish to enquire for any property, but only to see the members of his ancestors' family now living. His wife and sister are now in Paris, and he is to return immediately, for preparation for his presentation to the court next week." This information was communicated to madame, who requested us to call again at four o'clock that afternoon.

I should have said that my companions were so interested in this quaint old city that they preferred a thorough investigation of it rather than to accompany me in the questionable success of seeking for old family representatives and associations.

Punctually at four o'clock I was at the house again, and was formally, with great civility and ceremony, ushered into the parlor, where I met a very fine looking lady, of about fifty years of age, I should suppose, rather short and stout, with as bright complexion and cheerful countenance as one of twenty-five or thirty.

As a companion there was a gentleman, probably seventy years of age, who was introduced to me as Dr. ——. I soon realized that his presence was as a counsellor and advisor in any result that might succeed our interview. I understood sufficient French to know what passed between them. In order to relieve them from any restraint or embarrassment, I told Henner to ask her if my papers had been examined. She replied yes, and they were incorrect. She ordered her servant to bring from its lockup receptacle her husband's lengthy genealogy in French, and referring to it, she observed to her counsellor, that it declared a Gabriel Bernon went to America and died there, leaving no posterity. I told Henner to call her attention to other parts of the paper, and she would find a correct account of his family, and to say to the doctor that it was a very natural mistake to make in the difficulty and infrequency of being able to communicate with his family in France, if there was no emergency requiring it. He very readily assented to Henner's explanation, and called madame's attention to it, and other parts of the paper's correctness. I had with me also from my

mother, a seal representative of the Bernon coat of arms, and asked for hers. It was brought, with a lighted candle and sealing wax, which the doctor took and very expertly made several impressions of each. Again madame denied any similarity of the one to the other. The doctor said: "You are very much mistaken, madame; it is precisely the same," and pointed out critically the designation of each. With that peculiar French shrug of the shoulders she exclaimed: "Mon Dieu, is it possible!" I told Henner to repeat to them the information he had given to the maid in the morning, of my personal position and intended court presentation. He, the doctor, seemed perfectly satisfied with all that had occurred. After an hour had passed, unwilling to trespass further upon their courtesy, time and attention, or to make any intrusive enquiry as to their own personal history, I retired, making proper acknowledgment for their kind and courteous manner of my reception and somewhat protracted interview.

As I was passing to the door, she expressed her gratification at seeing me, and gave me as a souvenir the copy of the French genealogy which had been the

subject of our consideration. It was printed on the thickest and strongest paper of ordinary foolscap form, but quadruple in its size. The type was in ordinary form, but nearly as large as capitals. They very kindly informed me that another family connected with Gabriel Bernon resided elsewhere in La Rochelle, and advised my seeing them. I told her I would call upon them the next day at twelve o'clock, noon.

At the hour appointed and place mentioned, Henner and myself were present, and found a family of three ladies, sisters, nearly connected with Gabriel Bernon; two being maiden ladies, the other, Madame Steinman, who was confined to her bed with a very severe illness, which eventually proved fatal. I was much impressed and gratified in being informed that Madame Bernon and the doctor had notified this family of my presence and identity. In recognition of which, I was invited into Madame Steinman's sick chamber, upon the walls of which was suspended the original of the portrait now in possession of my son, Gabriel Bernon Dyer.

Madame Steinman told me of her having a son residing in New York. I was also informed by the

ladies that Baron de Bernon was then living in the Chateau Guillemard, in Bourbon-Vendée, whom they had also informed of the presence of an American descendant of Gabriel Bernon, whose identity could be satisfactorily confirmed. In a short time after this I received a kind and courteous invitation to visit him, in which he advised me of the route and time it would require for my so doing. He had been likewise made aware of my wife and younger sister being then in Paris awaiting my return, for our presentation at court within a short time. This I assigned as the necessity of my declining his kind invitation.

After his receipt of my inability of seeing him at his chateau, I received a most characteristic letter with proposals of marriage between his son, of suitable age, and my sister, stating that his son would succeed him as the inheritor of his titles and estate. He enquired rather minutely what dowry my sister would bring with her, offering to duplicate it for the benefit of the young people.

This was a most unexpected issue of his courtesy and our correspondence, and one somewhat difficult

of proper action. My reply was expressive of the great honor he had done my family in his proposal. I assured him of its being most gratefully appreciated by all interested, and expressed the great reluctance I felt in communicating to him the inability of my family to regard it with approval. As my sister was the only member at home with my parents, who were somewhat advanced in life, her separation from them would create the most painful emotions ; and I was apprehensive that much more serious results would be realized in her leaving them under any circumstances, especially those then existing. The time and distance of any interchange of communication or visiting to and from home were too great and difficult, if not hazardous, and necessarily attendant upon the separation which the acceptance of his proposal would require ; my reply, that I should be unable to visit him, terminated our correspondence.

I should have stated that my most courteous reception and gratifying recognition by the Bernon ladies were due, in a great degree, to the kindness of Monsieur Paul Louis Armand Auboyneau, a graduate of Brown University in 1799, to whom all my papers and

pretensions had been submitted by the last named family. As a student at Brown University he had been a frequent guest and visitor to my mother's family. His recollections of her as Miss Frances Jones were vivid and highly flattering, as he referred to her personal appearance, manners and address. He fully verified all that I had said or done in the matter under consideration, and, as expressive of it, requested my presence at his family gathering, at dinner or tea, the next day. The former I declined, apprehensive of its formality in my limited ability for the maintenance of the conversation usually connected with that entertainment. At the tea-table I was introduced to his family, and passed the most delightful evening in giving him the most recent information of his former friend and associates, of many of whom he had not heard since his graduation, half a century previous (forty-four years).

As he recalled many of them, it was a sad reply I had to make ("dead, sir"). Of their families I could say more. On my return home, I sent to him the last tax-book, Providence Directory, and the annual and triennial catalogues of Brown University.

To return to the Bernon ladies. As one of the maiden sisters accompanied me to the door, I referred as delicately as I could to the inexpressible pleasure which some souvenir of their kindness would give my family at home. She promptly apprehended my meaning, and asked if I had particularly noticed the portrait in the sick sister's chamber. I replied I had been so engrossed with the presence of those about me that I had not. She led me back to the room and pointing to the portrait, said: "There is our most valuable souvenir of the past." Any further reference to it would have been inappropriate and ill-advised, although when at Monsieur Auboyneau's I expressed a wish for a copy of it. I asked him if such a request would be intrusive or unwelcome. He replied: "I will see and let you know." Soon after our return home the copy was sent through his and their generous kindness, without cost of any kind to me. Soon after its receipt, Madame Steinman's death occurred, of which a formal notice was sent to my family, that they might be present at her obsequies. With this notice of her death and the invitation was enclosed a lock of her hair.

These recognitions of our connection with Gabriel Bernon and his family were as gratifying, if not affecting, as had been my personal interviews. In all of my intercourse with the different families I had referred to our frequent adoption of the Bernon names; my maternal grandmother being Esther Jones, and this was also the name of one of my mother's sisters. My grandmother's brother was Bernon Dunn; my mother and an elder sister were named Frances, from Francois LeRoy, Gabriel Bernon's father-in-law; another, Esther, and my son, Gabriel Bernon, concludes the list. An account of the two court receptions, and of further travels in Italy, etc., would be interesting, but irrelevant to this paper. In closing, however, I offer a tribute to the hallowed and endeared memory of one who, through the entirety of a protracted, active and unusually eventful life, was the expressive possessor and most faithful exponent of the highest, brightest, purest and best attributes of an exalted Christian character. And whatever meritorious distinction my family may have, or can acquire as descendants of such an honorable and distinguished ancestry, is also due to the

direction and control of a mother of the most exalted quality of character that could adorn and elevate humanity; my family and myself sorrowfully realizing that in "this wide world's space, there is, indeed, one vacant place."

GENEALOGY.

1. André Bernon m. Catherine DuBouché 1545
2. Léonard Bernon m. Francoise Carré 1578
3. André Bernon m. Jeanne Lescour date unknown.
 " " " Marie Papin 1605
4. André Bernon m. Susanne Guillemard 1631
 Children { Esther, Jeanneton, Gabriel,* Jean & Jaques,
 { André, Eve, Susanne, Marie and Samuel Bernon.
5. Gabriel Bernon m. Esther LeRoy 16—
 " " " Mary Harris.
 Gabriel, Marie, Esther, Sarah and Jeanne Bernon (children
 of first wife).
6. Marie Bernon m. Abraham Tourtellot about 1692
 Children — Gabriel, Esther and Abraham Tourtellot.
7. Abraham Tourtellot m. Lydia Ballard about 1716
 " " " Hannah Corps (née Case).
 " " " ——— Williams.
 Mary, Lydia & Esther, Abraham, Jonathan, Benjamin and
 Sarah Tourtellot (children of first wife).

* Born April 6, 1644; died February 1, 1736.

8. Esther Tourtellot m. Samuel Dunn 1746
Children — Bernon, Esther, Anne and Samuel Dunn.
9. Esther Dunn m. Thomas Jones 1777
Anne Dunn m. William Jones 1787
Children — Thomas, Frances, John P., Benjamin Dunn,
Esther and Sarah Jones (children of Thomas and
Esther): and others who died in childhood.
Harriet Dunn and others (children of William and Anne).
10. Frances Jones m. Elisha Dyer Oct. 15, 1801
Harriet Dunn Jones m. Thomas Coles Hoppin, Nov. 12, 1811
Children — Caroline, Frances Jones, Elisha, George Rath-
bone and Esther D. Rathbone Dyer.
William Jones, Anna J., Thomas F., Sarah C. D., Francis
E., Hamilton, Eliza J., Washington, Augustus, Harriet
(died in infancy), Harriet J. and Courtland Hoppin.
11. Elisha Dyer m. Anna Jones Hoppin Oct. 8, 1833
Children — George Rathbone, Henry Lyman (died in
infancy), Thomas Hoppin (died in infancy), Elisha,
Anna Jones, Gabriel Bernon and William J. Dyer.
12. Elisha Dyer m. Nancy Anthony Viall . . . Nov. 26, 1861
Anna Jones Dyer m. Elijah K. Hubbard . . Oct. 4, 1864
William Jones Dyer m. Lilian P. Greene . . April 23, 1879

